

Tahiti: Isle of Dreams

the climber. The trees mount but a
little way.
Thereafter there are perhaps a few
isolated casuarinas,
palms, guavas, sycamores, but
soon enough
the long gentle slopes.

When the clouds lift, rugged peaks
are seen
to thrust scarred heads above, all of
them unconquered; and whether they lift or not
the slopes
are broken with great gashes as if some
giant hand
had torn down the mountain side with
immense
crooked fingers. Down each such
gash a river
foams to the sea, fed perpetually by
the rains on
high. Along the level you cross some
stream or
another every few hundred yards, and
every mile
or so a stream big enough to be
called a river.
It is by these river-valleys that the
interior can
alone be reached. There are no
other roads.
By the side of some, small paths run
up towards
the mountains for a few kilometres,
but then, if
not before, you must take to the very

water-course
if you would make any further
progress. Except
where the water has thus cut its way,
the tropical
vegetation is a thick wall. Even if a
path be cut
through it literally, with knife and axe,
on emerging
from the brush one is no better off*
For the